

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY SAIGON PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 JEC PARIS 07870

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: VN, PINT

SUBJECT: GVN-PRG BILATERALS: 46TH PLENARY SESSION

MARCH 29, 1974

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. TODAY'S SESSION FOUND THE PRG DEFENDING ITS SIX POINT PROPOSAL OF 22 MARCH, WHILE THE GVN PRESENTED ITS OWN THREE POINT PROPOSAL IN THE FORM OF A DRAFT "PRELIMINARY ACCORD." THE SUBSEQUENT PRESS CONFERENCE PROVIDED A HINT, BUT A FAR FROM CONCLUSIVE ONE, OF FORWARD MOVEMENT IN THE PRG POSITION VIS-A-VIS THAT OF THE GVN. A MEMBER OF THE GVN DELEGATION HAS THE "FEELING" THAT MORE IS TO COME FROM THE PRG, PERHAPS WITH THE EVENTUAL RETURN OF THE PRG'S HIEU TO PARIS. END SUMMARY.

2. DINH BA THI OPENED FOR THE PRG WITH A BRIEF REVIEW OF THE SIX POINTS OF THE PRG 22 MARCH DECLARATION. HE STRESSED THAT, BECAUSE OF THE MILITARY ACTIVITIES AND INTERFERENCE OF THE US (SHIPMENT OF ARMS, AUGMENTATION OF DISGUISED MILITARY PERSONNEL, INCITEMENT AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF GVN MILITARY OPERATIONS), AN EFFECTIVE CEASE FIRE IS A MATTER OF PRIME URGENCY. HE DEFENDED THE PRG PROPOSAL AS PROVIDING FOR REASONABLE AND PRECISE DELAYS BETWEEN THE VARIOUS ACTIONS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED IN SERIES. THE PRG, HE SAID, IN
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ADVANCING ITS PROPOSAL, HAD MADE A GREAT EFFORT TO

SEEK PROGRESS.

3. THI ALLEGED THAT THE PRG PROPOSAL HAD FOUND SUPPORT AND FAVORABLE COMMENT IN NUMEROUS QUARTERS AND CITED A DISPARATE LIST OF SOURCES: THIRD FORCE NEUTRALISTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM AND ABROAD, LE MONDE, THE HERALD TRIBUNE, REUTERS, THE TIMES OF LONDON. HE COMPARED THIS WITH THE PRECIPITOUS AND NEGATIVE GVN REACTION. HE CONTRASTED GVN PROPOSITIONS FOR FORMING COMMISSIONS WITH THE PRG POSITION THAT ACCORD ON PRINCIPLES SHOULD FIRST BE SOUGHT AND CLAIMED THAT THE GVN WAS THUS SEEKING TO EVADE THE PRG PROPOSALS. THE GVN SHOULD NOT SEEK THUS TO MANEUVER, BUT SHOULD RESPOND SERIOUSLY; THIS IS THE ONLY WAY. HIS CONCLUSION WAS STANDARD, THAT IF THE GVN CONTINUED ON ITS PRESENT PATH, THE PRG WOULD BE FORCED TO DEFEND THE PEACE AND THE LIBERATED ZONE AND THE US AND SAIGON WOULD HAVE TO ASSUME ALL RESPONSIBILITY.

4. NGUYEN XUAN PHONG BEGAN HIS RELATIVELY RESTRAINED PREPARED STATEMENT WITH A DISCUSSION OF THE PRG PROPOSALS. A CEASE-FIRE, AND THE PROBLEM OF PRISONERS, FALLS UNDER THE TWO PARTY JOINT MILITARY COMMISSION AND THE ICCS AND WOULD ONLY BE ARRIVED AT THROUGH A SERIES OF SPECIFIC STEPS SUCH AS THOSE SUGGESTED BY THE GVN ON 18 JUNE 1973 AND 15 JANUARY 1974 RATHER THAN THROUGH THE KIND OF CALL FOR A CEASEFIRE WHICH HAD NOT SUCCEEDED IN THE PAST. FOR THE GVN, ITS CEASEFIRE PROPOSALS OF 15 JANUARY STILL STOOD. PHONG PROVIDED A STATISTICAL COMPARISON OF THE GVN PERFORMANCE RE THE RELEASE OF PRISONERS WITH THAT OF THE OTHER SIDE AND NOTED PREVIOUS GVN PROPOSALS FOR PRISONER EXCHANGES WHICH HAD BEEN ADVANCED IN THE TWO PARTY JOINT MILITARY COMMISSION.

5. PHONG CRITICIZED THE PRG PRESENTATION OF THE OTHER FOUR POINTS IN ISOLATION, SINCE THEY WERE CLOSELY LINKED TOGETHER AND SHOULD BE SOLVED

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TOGETHER, AS THE GVN HAD SEVERAL TIMES SUGGESTED. HE QUESTIONED THE NEED FOR CONSIDERABLE DELAY BETWEEN EACH STEP AS SUGGESTED BY THE COMMUNISTS, PARTICULARLY THAT BEFORE THE GENERAL ELECTION, WHICH LED THE GVN TO SUSPECT THAT THE PRG WAS SEEKING TO EVADE ELECTIONS. THE GVN PROPOSAL FOR ELECTIONS ON 20 JULY STILL STOOD, BUT IF THAT WAS TOO SOON, THE GVN IS READY TO CONSIDER ANOTHER DATE. PHONG

DESCRIBED AS EXTREMELY VAGUE THE WAY IN WHICH THE
PRG COVERED THE QUESTION OF ARMED FORCES, WHICH

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 03 JEC PARIS 07870

"EVERYONE KNOWS INCLUDES THE PROBLEM OF THE MASSIVE
AND ILLEGAL PRESENCE OF HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF
NORTH VIETNAMESE REGULARS," WHICH IS "DIRECTLY
LINKED TO THE EXERCISE OF THE RIGHT TO SELF
DETERMINATION OF THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH VIETNAM," TO
THE FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM OF THE ELECTIONS.

6. AFTER SOME FURTHER RATHER CONCILIATORY REMARKS,
IN WHICH HE STRESSED THAT HE WAS TRYING TO THROW
LIGHT ON THE PROBLEMS RATHER THAN TO STRESS THE
DIFFERENCES "BETWEEN OUR TWO SIDES," PHONG PUT FORTH
THE GVN DRAFT OF WHAT HE CHARACTERIZED AS A
"PRELIMINARY ACCORD BASED ON THREE EXTREMELY
SIMPLE, EQUITABLE AND REALISTIC POINTS."

7. IN SUMMARY, THE DRAFT INCLUDES: ARTICLE 1.
IMMEDIATE FORMATION OF FOUR COMMISSIONS TO RESOLVE
IN DETAIL THE FOUR ESSENTIAL PROBLEMS ASSIGNED TO
THE CONFERENCE (GUARANTEE OF DEMOCRATIC LIBERTIES,
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF
RECONCILIATION AND CONCORD, ORGANIZATION OF FREE

GENERAL ELECTIONS UNDER INTERNATIONAL SURVEILLANCE,
THE QUESTION OF VIETNAMESE ARMED FORCES IN SOUTH
VIETNAM). THESE WOULD WORK IN PARALLEL AND FINISH
THEIR WORK IN THIRTY DAYS IN ORDER TO ARRIVE AT A
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FINAL ACCORD ON THE INTERNAL PROBLEMS OF SOUTH
VIETNAM. ARTICLE 2. THE FINAL ACCORD WILL BE A
"SOLUTION GLOBALE" (FROM THE FRENCH VERSION). THE
PROBLEMS OF THE CEASE-FIRE AND OF PRISONER EXCHANGE
WHICH BELONG TO THE TWO PARTY JOINT MILITARY
COMMISSION AND THE ICCS, WILL BE DEALT WITH BY THEM
IN PARALLEL WITH THE WORK OF THE FOUR COMMISSIONS.
ARTICLE 3. GENERAL ELECTIONS WOULD BE ORGANIZED FOR
20 JULY, OR AN EARLY LATER DATE IF THE TWO PARTIES
AGREE. THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF RECONCILIATION
AND CONCORD WOULD BE FORMED IMMEDIATELY AFTER
SIGNATURE OF THE FINAL ACCORD AND WOULD AFTER
THIRTY DAYS ESTABLISH THE PROCEDURES AND MODALITIES
FOR GENERAL ELECTIONS.

8. ACCORDING TO A MEMBER OF THE GVN DELEGATION, IN
THE DISCUSSION WHICH FOLLOWED THE PRG FOCUSED ON
THE MERITS OF ITS OWN SIX POINTS, REPEATING THE
ARGUMENT THAT IT WAS NECESSARY TO SETTLE ON THE
PRINCIPLES BEFORE ARRIVING AT SPECIFICS. DINH
BA THI WAS DESCRIBED AS APPEARING "NERVOUS." THE
PRG, OF COURSE, DID NOT ACCEPT THE GVN PROPOSAL,
AND DWELT AT SOME LENGTH ON THE PROBLEMS (AND
ALLEGED REPRESSIONS) BESETTING SOUTH VIETNAM. IT
MADE AN EFFORT TO PLAY UP THE ROLE OF THE "THIRD
FORCE" AND WAS CHALLENGED IN THIS.

9. THE SUBSEQUENT AFTERNOON PRESS CONFERENCE WAS
ATTENDED BY SOME TWENTY PERSONS, WITH FIVE OR SIX
OF THESE DESCRIBED BY ONE OBSERVER AS "REAL
JOURNALISTS" (NO AMERICANS IMMEDIATELY IDENTIFIED).
DUONG DINH THAO, FOR THE PRG, COVERED FAMILIAR
PROPAGANDA GROUND, INCLUDING THE CAI LAY INCIDENT.
AT ONE POINT, HE HANDED OUT AN ALLEGED LETTER FROM
IMPRISONED SOUTH VIETNAMESE STUDENT HUYNH TAN MAM
CONCERNING HIS EFFORTS TO BE SET FREE IN SAIGON IN
FEBRUARY; THIS WAS A RESPONSE TO GVN CHALLENGES

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TO PROVIDE EVIDENCE OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE "THIRD FORCE." THAO'S RESPONSE TO ONE OF TWO QUESTIONS (FROM AFP) WAS INTERESTING. ASKED TO COMMENT ON PHONG'S PROPOSALS FOR COMMISSIONS, HE SAID THAT THE PRG WAS "NOT AGAINST" THE FORMATION OF THE COMMISSIONS, BUT FELT THAT THEY COULD NOT BE EFFECTIVE UNTIL THE PLENARY CONFERENCE REACHED AGREEMENT ON PRINCIPLES.

10. THIS RESPONSE WAS SEIZED UPON BY GVN SPOKESMAN NGUYEN DAC KHE AS REPRESENTING "MORE PROGRESS IN ONE HOUR THAN WE HAVE SEEN IN ONE YEAR." RE THE PRG SIX POINTS, KHE WARNED THAT THEIR TIMETABLE MEANT THAT ELECTIONS WOULD BE CARRIED OUT WITH THE NVA PRESENT. KHE, WITH "REGRET," CHARACTERIZED THIS RESPONSE TO THE GVN PROPOSAL AS "REJECTION."

11. COMMENTING PRIVATELY ON THE DAYS EVENTS, A MEMBER OF THE GVN DELEGATION ALSO TOOK NOTE OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE. ASKED ABOUT THE CONTINUED ABSENCE OF PRG CHIEF DELEGATE HIEU, HE SAID THAT PRG HAD SAID LAST WEEK THAT HIEU WOULD "DEFINITELY" BE BACK, BUT THAT NO MENTION HAD BEEN MADE THIS WEEK. HE WONDERED ALOUD IF HIEU WOULD BE BRINGING SOMETHING MORE WITH HIM.

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